



ATTACHMENT E

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
810 Richards Street, Suite 400
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

October 29, 2007

Mr. Butch Gima
Maui Citizen Review Panel
P.O.Box 630400
Lanai City, Hawaii 96763-0400

Dear Mr. Gima:

Thank you for the Maui Citizen Review Panel's (CRP) 2005 and 2006 Annual Reports and recommendations to improve Child Welfare Services (CWS). We appreciate the Panel's efforts and work on behalf of children and families.

The CRP's 2007 recommendations and the Department's responses (in italics) are as follows:

1. By June 1, 2008, DHS will have completed an active foster parent satisfaction survey/questionnaire, and have mailed it to all current foster parents. The results of the survey/questionnaire, along with DHS feedback on plans for improvement, will be delivered to the Maui CRP before November 1, 2008.
 - a. The CRP should have time to review and give feedback on the draft questionnaire before its final publishing.

Part of the work with the Hui Hoomalu (Partners in Development Foundation, Catholic Charities Hawaii, and Foster Family Programs of Hawaii) is an annual survey of foster parents and random calls to them. However, we will not be able to provide the CRP with the opportunity to review and give feedback on the questionnaire, since it was already finalized and sent prior to receiving this recommendation. We will provide the CRP with the results of the survey when it is completed and compiled by Hui Hoomalu.

2. By March 1, 2008, DHS will have all Hawaii children eligible for adoption listed and profiled on the AdoptUSKids website.

DHS has already created an internal excel database in 2006 to track PC children/youth without identified permanent caretakers (legal guardians or adoptive parents). Each CWS Section updates the database monthly. Currently, we have approximately 150 children/youth in the permanent custody of the Department with very special needs. We are engaged in ongoing efforts to list all children who are available for adoption who do not have permanent homes identified on the AdoptUSKids as well as other national websites.

We have also implemented the CWSB "Keiki Placement Panel", a weekly teleconference with the CWS Branch Administrator, the Program Development Administrator, CWS Section Administrators, and EPIC Ohana Conferencing to review all new placements of children into

foster care and a monthly "Permanency Review Panel" of the status of all children and youth who are free for adoption to ensure that every effort is being made to find them permanent homes, including listing them on AdoptUSKids and other websites and venues that can lead to adoption of the approximately 150 children in the permanent custody of the Department who are waiting for permanent homes.

3. The results of the last fiscal year of DHS' participation in AdoptUSKids, HOPE Inc., Hawaii Family Forum, and Heart Gallery shall be documented and evaluated, with report delivered to the Maui CRP by February 1, 2008.

The Department agrees that we should document the results of DHS' participation in AdoptUsKids (Adoption Exchange), HOPE Inc. (who is the contracted agency and not Hawaii Family Forum) and Heart Galley. We will provide the information to the CRP when it is compiled.

4. DHS will send at least one CRP member to the Annual CRP National Conference.

If funds are available DHS will sponsor at least one CRP member to attend the Annual CRP National Conference. We request the CRP provide the name of the person the CRP would nominate for attendance at the conference.

5. DHS will increase the number of monitoring staff to insure 2 monitoring visits per year to each POS contractor.

The number of monitoring staff has been increased. The Purchase of Services Unit now has a Supervisor and another experienced half-time staff, but it will not be possible at this time to accomplish 2 monitoring visits annually to each POS contractor per year. We have found that it is not sufficient to increase staff; we must also recruit, train, and maintain staffing levels that would enable the Department to monitor each POS contractor on-site. Until we can, Assistant CWS Program Development Administrators and POS monitors will continue to work together to monitor our contracted services. The monitoring is done through feedback from CWS staff, clients and providers, quarterly progress reports by the providers, and on-site monitoring visits by the POS monitors. CWS Section Administrators and Supervisors are expected to have ongoing meetings with POS providers.

6. DHS will continue to support and fund all costs for the semi annual statewide CRP meetings.

DHS is committed to supporting the annual statewide CRP Meeting.

7. DHS will continue to fund all costs for Molokai's and Lanai's participation in the CRP meetings.

DHS is committed to fund transportation for Molokai and Lanai representatives' participation in the CRP meetings.

8. DHS will insure the resurrection of the Hawaii, Kauai and Oahu section CRPs by the end of FY 07-08.

We are trying to resurrect the CRP's and are hopeful that Kauai and Hawaii will be able to revive their CRP's. We are looking for ways to encourage and sustain the efforts of the CWS Section Administrator's to revitalize the CRP's in areas other than Maui. We will also

be asking for support from the Maui CRP to assist the Department as other CRP's are formed.

9. In conjunction with the Foster Parent Association, DHS will introduce legislation in the 2008 Legislative Session or change Departmental Policy to increase Foster Care Board rates and Difficulty of Care payments 5% each year for the next 6 years, to set rates in three age categories (0-5, 6-12 and 13-18) and tie future increases to the CPI (Consumer Price Index).

Thank you for this recommendation. We agree with the concept of raising the foster board. The Department is considering the possibility of submitting a request to raise the Foster Care Board rate in the next fiscal year.

10. DHS will determine by 2/08 the feasibility of decentralizing their Personnel Department, and report its findings and plan to the Maui CRP by the end of FY 07-08.

We will be taking no action on this recommendation since it is beyond the scope and authority of the Child Welfare Services Branch.

11. DHS will insure a transition plan is developed and implemented by 1/1/08 to insure that all foster youth exiting the CWS/Family Court system are either:
 - a. linked with Adult Mental Health
 - b. linked with Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
 - c. linked with Developmental Disabilities Division (DD)
 - d. established with an adequate living environment
 - e. reunited with family
 - f. have established a post secondary vocational or educational plan and/or
 - g. reviewed by the Family Court Judge and/or Guardian Ad Litem.

We believe that the Federally required Case Plan, or Permanent Plan for youth in foster care age 15 and up meets this recommendation since it would contain information specific to the independent living plan for the youth, including linkages, living arrangements, whether the child was being reunified with their family, the youths educational plan, etc. Each of the Case or Permanent Plans is reviewed and approved by the Department, the Guardian Ad Litem and Family Court Judge prior to being ordered.

DHS also continues to expand services to youth who will exit foster care through collaborative efforts with community partners and the Hawaii Foster Youth Coalition to enhance and to promote transition services for our exiting foster youth. The listing of transition services (which include Independent Living skills, higher education board allowance, Med-QUEST coverage) is posted on the DHS Website and updated when new information or services becomes available. The Coalition members also serve as mentors for our youth.

In addition, Family Finding and Youth Circles for youth and family members through EPIC Ohana are important resources for our youth. Family Finding is a way for the Department to locate family members and other supportive adults who can provide support and family connections for the youth during and after their stay in foster care. The purpose of the Youth Circle is to reconnect youth with their families and circle of support and enlist family support to reduce

homelessness, unemployment other problems that youth exiting foster care encounter without assistance.

12. DHS will conduct an analysis of the Central Intake process by 2/08, determining if practice has met the intent and if any policy changes need to be implemented. DHS will provide a report of their findings and recommendations to the Maui Section CRP by the end of FY 07-08.

We agree with the recommendation, but we will not be analyzing the Central Intake process apart from our ongoing collaborative effort with the National Resource Center for Child Protection (NRCCP) to monitor the implementation and outcomes of the DRS to ensure that it continues to meet our goals of providing the least intensive, most effective intervention to all families referred to CWS for child abuse and/or neglect.

As part of our ongoing technical assistance from the NRCCP, Theresa Costello and Theresa Doyle, from the Program Development Office reviewed over 100 cases and visited each section where meetings were held with CWS, Voluntary Case Management and Family Strengthening Services staff as part of our ongoing commitment to monitoring the implementation of the DRS system. When a report and recommendations is finalized we will forward it to the CRP for your information.

13. DHS will conduct an analysis of the Kinship Care policy by 2/08, determining if practice is meeting the intent of the policy. Furthermore, DHS will determine if any policy changes need to be implemented, and report their findings and recommendations to the Maui Section CRP by the end of FY 08-08.

The Department is conducting a kinship study in collaboration with the Child Welfare League of America. We will provide the findings and recommendations to the CRP as they become available.

14. DHS will fund the Maui CRP budget, as noted below, with CAPTA funds.

We are unable, at this time, to commit to funding the Maui, and any additional CRP's at this time.

Thank you again for your annual reports and recommendations. We appreciate the commitment and the work accomplished by the Maui CRP and look forward to our continued partnership. Please contact John Walters, Program Development Administrator, at 586-5675 if the Panel has further questions.

Sincerely,

Amy Tsark, Administrator (Acting)
Social Services Division

c: Lillian B. Koller, Director